

GCF Observer Network of Civil Society, Indigenous Peoples, and Local Communities
Intervention on

SAP059: Fueling Green Recovery in Armenia – advancing forest infrastructure and creating sustainable jobs for rural communities

Access the document: <https://www.greenclimate.fund/document/gcf-b43-02-add06>

We appreciate this SAP project, the first for Armenia's direct access entity, and find it overall well-conceived and constructed. We appreciate in particular its focus on climate-resilient reforestation, which will receive the bulk of the GCF funding, on the propagation of local seeds from locally adapted indigenous "mother trees", instead of relying, as so many ill-conceived reforestation efforts do, on fast-growing non-native invasive tree species.

However, we find that Component 2, centered on developing climate-resilient forest livelihoods and agroforestry, accounts for only about 5% of the total funding. Given the scope of activities and relevance to community resilience, this appears underfunded. While we appreciate the DAE's response during the technical session and in writing that this is because of a focus on "targeted demonstration of opportunities rather than immediate long-term investments", we remain concerned that future investments, potentially relying on carbon market mechanisms or other donor contributions, may not materialize. The pilot approach, covering only 400 hectares of demonstration plots, is not sufficiently large enough in scale, and the marketing approaches for alternative non-timber forest products (limited to two centers) are not integrated enough in local markets to sustain beyond the pilot phase.

We further encourage close attention to the development of the digitalized Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) system during implementation to ensure it becomes fully operational, nationally integrated, and institutionalized beyond the project period. Likewise, since agroforestry is less established in Armenia, livelihood interventions should be designed and monitored with long-term sustainability in mind, ensuring they remain viable, market-integrated, and community-owned.

We are also heartened to learn from the DAE's written responses to our questions that gender and social expertise will be incorporated in the Project Management Unit and that implementation of gender-responsive activities is not limited to the rather small budget allocated to the implementation of the Gender Action Plan (GAP). We take the DAE at its promise to review the adequacy of the budgeted amount for the GAP as it begins implementation, including its promise to add resources to the GAP through its contingency budget if and when needed.